

Defining Literary Criticism

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Interpretation

- Can a story have more than one interpretation?
- Are interpretations always valid?
- How does criticism enter this territory?

What is criticism?

- It is a discipline that seeks to evaluate, describe, study, justify, interpret and understand a work of art.
- In terms of literature, criticism operates on the basis of literary theory, but also of other artistic, social and even scientific theories.

Literary Theory

- It is the (meta)language that one uses to condition one's understanding of a literary work.
- This (meta)language describes literature, which can be considered a language of itself (the language of a given story or poem)
- Critics use these terms to apply their knowledge and their reaction to a work, therefore losing their innocence to a text

The reading process

- Reading as Roseblatt explains it is not linear, it is a transaction
- A reader possesses a mindset and a spectrum of knowledge which interacts with the contents of a work, causing an exchange reaction that directly influences a reader's interpretation of a text
- People who share a common reaction and methodology to interpret texts are examples of schools of criticism

Literary Theory and Literature

- How do readers define them?
- Literary theory is based on epistemological aspects of learning and reality; it uses a methodology to create interpretations that may conflict with those of other theories.
- These methodologies and schools of criticism influence how critics treat texts and whether they consider them **literature** or not.

Function of Literary Theory and Literature

- Plato and Aristotle were concerned with two functions of literature: teach (extrinsic) or entertain (intrinsic); they remained concerned with morality and how literature could promote it.
- Also, Aristotle fostered the analysis of literature and its parts in relation to each other and to the whole of the work.
- Savoir: to analyze and examine (learn)
- Connaitre: to deeply know and experience (entertain)